

# Academics concerned about Singapore's 'fake news' law

April 15 2019

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Singapore's proposed 'fake news' law includes powers for ministers to order sites like Facebook, Google and Twitter to put warnings next to posts authorities deem false

Nearly 100 academics worldwide have expressed concern over

Singapore's proposed law against "fake news", warning it could threaten academic freedom and hurt the city-state's ambition to become a global education hub.

The government this month unveiled a bill containing tough measures, including powers for ministers to order sites like Facebook, Google and Twitter to put warnings next to posts authorities deem false, and extreme cases, to take them down.

If an action is deemed malicious and damaging to Singapore's interests, companies could be hit with fines of up to Sg\$1 million (\$740,000), while individuals could face jail terms of up to 10 years.

Authorities in the tightly-controlled country insist the measures are necessary to prevent online falsehoods sowing social divisions, but the move has sparked anger from press freedom groups and tech giants such as Facebook and Google.

Now ninety-seven [academics](#) from around the world with expertise in Singapore and Asia have signed a letter warning the proposed legislation "may deter scholarship and set precedents harmful to global academia".

"We are concerned that the proposed legislation will have unintended detrimental consequences for scholars and research in Singapore," said the group, who included academics from Harvard and Yale, as well as institutions in Britain, Australia, and parts of Asia.

The letter, released at the weekend, also warned the law could compromise "Singapore's notable efforts to develop itself into an internationally-recognised hub for excellence in higher [education](#)".

Singapore is home to several leading higher education institutes, which attract academics from around the world.

The group, called Academics Against Disinformation, also said they wrote to the education ministry to express their concerns.

The ministry was cited in local media as saying the draft law does not restrict opinion and will not affect academic research work, but the academics said they could not accept the response as a guarantee.

Singapore is among several countries seeking to legislate against [fake news](#), and the bill is expected to pass easily through parliament, which is dominated by the long-ruling People's Action Party.

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Citation: Academics concerned about Singapore's 'fake news' law (2019, April 15) retrieved 22 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2019-04-academics-singapore-fake-news-law.html>

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